I: Good morning, and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper. I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection. The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I need you to sign the data consent form within the protocols of the university that I'm serving my bachelor's thesis. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk to you, and you can leave it at any time. I want to ask for your consent to record this conversation as that would make it easier for me to analyze the data later, and I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R10: Yes.

I: So, this interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers, so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the content of the interview is anonymous and used only for my thesis. Do you have any questions before we start?

R10: No.

I: So, my first question is, how would you personally define sustainability?

R10: When I think about sustainability, I think about longevity. So the whole idea of sustainability for me is that our actions and the way that we consume our resources needs to have a positive impact in the long term and that we are not being excessively wasteful with our resources. So water for example, trying not to use more than necessary or wasting it. Especially thinking about future generations, we need to make sure that we are able to sustain what we have on Earth now for the future. So for me, that means making an active effort to make positive choices for not just me but also my kids, and teaching them to be mindful so that they are able to carry on that mindset as well.

I: Great. To what extent would you say you are concerned about environmental issues and are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R10: Certainly, I am very concerned about environmental issues, mainly about the way that we, and by we I mean as all of us humans, are consuming resources. Because it has already been said by scientists that we are consuming resources at a much faster rate than we should be right? I think it is 2030 that they say is the year when climate change will become irreversible, but I'm not sure I will check on that and get back to you. But anyways, in my daily routine I do a lot of things for this. So of course I do the usual things such as recycling, reducing my water use, turning off the lights when I don't need them, trying to be paperless as possible all that. Also, when I go grocery shopping, I make sure to bring my own bags, reusable bags, so that I don't take plastic bags. So past that, my family has our own garden. Me and my wife have loved

growing our garden and growing our own vegetables. So in that way we are also sustaining ourselves, and we are able to share that with our friends and family as well. And then we also compost our food, so that creates a circular life, right? Because we are able to use our food scraps as compost for our own garden, and then that garden grows fruits and vegetables that we then eat. So we reduce our food waste as much as possible. And then lastly I would say reducing pollution. So both me and my wife drive electric cars, so reducing that pollution as well.

I: Great. So what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? Is there anything specific you pay attention to?

R10: I think there are three things that I pay attention to, two or three things. So first is if the package is recyclable or not, and if not recyclable then at least reusable. Because some things we cannot avoid right? But I try to buy things that are in glass or cardboard type packaging instead of plastic whenever I can. Then I would say I pay attention to the brand itself. So I try to buy from smaller brands whenever possible because I know that some corporations have bad reputations when it comes to sustainability, or not just sustainability but general ethics so… yeah. And then of course the last thing would be price and quality of the product.

I: Great. And along with that, what kind of packaged goods do you buy? Can you give me some examples of packed goods you've bought lately?

R10: Okay, so there are a lot of things. If you are talking about food, then we regularly buy things like bread, eggs, milk, cream cheese, ham. Also snacks for the kids like chips and crackers and all. And then other than that, I will often buy things from Amazon, like I needed a pack of lightbulbs the other day for example so things like that we will buy for the house.

I: Perfect. Among the products that you mentioned, have you noticed if any of them were sustainable products?

R10: Umm so I guess the eggs will be sustainable because they come in a cardboard carton, so we are able to use that in our compost as well actually. The bread we also try to get from the actual bakery section, in Publix I'm sure you know, so that also comes in a paper bag instead of the plastic covers that the readymade breads have. I think with Amazon it depends on the product. The outside box is always cardboard so we always recycle that, but then I guess the product could be in a plastic container or something like that.

I: Okay. And how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? What criteria do you use?

R10: I think it is like what I mentioned before, right? So if the product is recyclable or reusable, that is a big thing for me. Usually if I am able to pick the same product between plastic packaging or cardboard packaging, of course I will always choose the cardboard. I also like to check the ingredients because I don't want to eat anything that is too processed or has artificial sugars or too many preservatives, things like that. So I also check that. I think that's it.

I: Okay, great. And the last open-ended question is, what elements of a product, if any, make you think it is more eco-friendly than another, regardless of whether you buy it or not?

R10: I think labels are always helpful. So if something says that it is natural or organic or something like that, I will always prefer to pick that one because I know it is better for you. Especially if it has some kind of official certification, some kind of USDA stamp, then I will always trust that. Other than that, I think just any kind of natural looking packaging is good. I don't want anything that looks too artificial, I prefer when things look more natural. Less is more in this case for me.

I: Great. Okay, now I'm going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify each of them based on which one out of the three you believe is the most sustainable. I ask that you provide a brief explanation of why you feel this way about each of the products. So let me share. Can you see my screen? You should see some pictures of ketchup.

R10: Yup I see that.

I: Okay, so the first category is the same brand and product packaged in different packaging material. Which one out of these three do you feel is the most sustainable and why?

R10: In my opinion, the third one, the aluminum can, is the most sustainable. That one or maybe the glass bottle on the left hand side. Both of them will be recyclable.

I: Okay. What about these ones?

R10: Again, the middle one, the aluminum can, would be my choice. I think since it is easily recyclable I prefer that one. Definitely not the plastic bottle.

I: And what about this third one?

R10: I guess the glass jar is the best option. You can definitely reuse that a couple of times before throwing it away, and glass is recyclable so it won't go in the trash. So I would pick that one. The one in the middle has a lot of plastic because it also has a plastic lid, so that is the worst one.

I: Okay. So this is the second category, so it is the same packaging materials but different brands. Here is the first set. Which of these would you pick?

R10: I think I would pick the Noosa one. I have tried Noosa before and I think it is very good, and it is a smaller company than the other two so I think they will be more sustainable. Of course I don't know that for sure but I am assuming that. I'm not sure if that cap is plastic or what, but maybe that one could also be reusable.

I: Okay, and what about these?

R10: They all look the exact same to me. I can't see any difference. Maybe the one on the right? Because it says non-GMO? I guess let's go with that one. Otherwise the three bottles look the same to me, I would probably pick this by ingredients.

I: Okay, what about these three?

R10: I think the Kerrygold, because that is the one we always get in our house. I don't know actually if the packaging itself is recyclable or not, but I think the outside looks like it is high quality. I like that it says grass-fed cows and all.

I: Out of these three?

R10: I would say all three are sustainable since they are glass bottles, based on the picture. My personal choice would be the one in the middle [Bonne Maman] just because I think it looks the most natural. The other ones I know, at least from my knowledge, have a lot of added sugars because they are usually for kids so I would not pick those ones.

I: Okay, and out of these three?

R10: These also all look the same to me. I guess the Triscuit ones look the best, or the healthiest at least. Maybe that is because of the images I don't know, but I like that it says 100% Whole Wheat and three simple ingredients and all. I guess it just looks the most natural to me.

I: Out of these three options?

R10: Well from a packaging perspective they are all the exact same. So this one I don't think it would make any difference to me, I would just pick the cheapest one to be completely honest. I don't really think of sustainability when it comes to things like dish soap and all. I think those kinds of essentials, unfortunately, there's not many sustainable type options for those.

I: Alright. And then the last group is different brands and different packaging materials for the same product. So what do you think about these three?

R10: Definitely the one on the left [On The Border] because it is a glass container. So same reasons as before, it is reusable and recyclable.

I: Okay, out of these three?

R10: I guess the Quaker one is the best because it is a cardboard box. Only thing is that there is always a plastic bag inside of it so I don't know. Maybe then the middle one [Honey Bunches] because at least it is less amount of material used.

I: And out of these three?

R10: The right one [Volleman's] looks like the best, even though at least in our grocery stores we cannot find this kind of bottle. So actually I would usually pick the middle one [Horizon Organic] because at least it is cardboard, but for us that is tricky because that is not always recyclable.

I: Okay, and this is the last set. So which one out of these three?

R10: I would pick the middle one [Rise], the can. It is the least amount of material so that is good, and also it is fully recyclable. The one on the right [Chameleon] is also good but the cap is plastic so you have to be careful with that.

I: Okay. And my final follow-up question is, did you perceive that there was any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands we have reviewed today? In case you're not familiar with greenwashing, it is defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact.

R10: Yeah so I am very familiar with greenwashing, and I definitely think some of the brands were doing it that we saw. I can't remember exactly what brands, but I think in general when you use certain phrases, like I said organic or natural, or even using colors like green and brown, that always makes people think "oh that one must be the best!" I think it is a subconscious thing, even for me I have to catch myself sometime from not making that mistake because sometimes you don't even realize you are doing it. So yeah.

I: Okay, that's all the questions that I have for you. Thank you so much for your help with my research.

R10: Of course, my pleasure.